



STATE OF MICHIGAN
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
LANSING

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GOVERNOR

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**Statement from the
State Board of Education Legislative Committee
RE: HB 4813 and HB 4815**

The State Board of Education appreciates the Legislature's desire to address the serious financial distress experienced by Buena Vista and Inkster school districts. While we understand that HB 4813 and HB 4815 are intended to address these two school districts specifically, it's important to note that the legislation is not limited to these two districts and could impact others throughout the state.

The State Board of Education wants every child in Michigan to receive a quality education, regardless of local economic conditions, and therefore offers the following recommendations to address districts that may find themselves in these circumstances in the future.

- Ensure realistic timelines for dissolution. Dissolving a school district seems unlikely within 21 days, or 60 days if after 2013. While this timeline may allow for a successful planning phase, it appears too short to allow a full transition of an insolvent district into neighboring districts.
- Create as little disruption for students as possible – The legislation should include a provision that allows the State Superintendent to designate a fiscally responsible entity, such as the ISD, to receive the student aid and either operate the learning program themselves or contract to operate schools with existing staff. This will allow for the time needed to ensure a deliberate process of developing and executing a consolidation plan.
- The bills do not take into account the impact on students with special needs, including those currently educated with an IEP. Legislation should require the receiving district to continue a student's IEP until convening an IEP team to review the student's individual education plan, consistent with federal law.
- Develop a mechanism for public input – The dissolution of a school district should include an opportunity for public comment.
- Due Process – There should be a due process mechanism that allows for local districts and/or Intermediate School Districts to appropriately dispute the findings of the State Superintendent and the Treasurer, and a timeline in which this may occur.

As part of the process of addressing insolvent districts, the SBE intends to develop a strategic statewide plan related to public education, in cooperation with various stakeholders. Considering the declining student population and the consistent increase in the number of public charter schools, a strategic plan should address future financial considerations before they reach crisis mode.

Members of the State Board of Education Legislative Committee: Casandra Ulbrich, Kathleen Straus, Eileen Weiser, and Lupe Ramos-Montigny

Adopted June 14, 2013 by State Board of Education Legislative Committee

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